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**For Immediate Release: June 16, 2010**

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## **Larson Commends VA for Easier and Faster Claims Process for Veterans**

**Washington, DC-** Today, U.S. Congressman John B. Larson applauded the efforts of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Eric Shinseki to streamline the processing of veteran's claims. As part of these efforts, the VA has shortened application forms, reduced paperwork and introduced a new program to decrease the overall processing time to ensure veterans receive faster claims decisions.

***"The men and women that served our country with honor and distinction should not be forced to idly wait to receive benefits from their service due to red tape,"*** said Congressman Larson.

***"When I visited the Hartford Vet Center, veteran after veteran expressed to me that they wanted a simplified system in the VA that worked. I applaud Secretary Shinseki and the Obama Administration for making the quality of care and responsiveness to the concerns of our veterans a foremost priority."***

The VA's has shortened application forms to reduce paperwork for veterans are being made available on VA's Web site at [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms) , includes:

- A shortened VA Form 21-526 for Veterans applying for the first-time to VA for disability compensation or pension benefits. This form has been cut from 23 pages to 10 pages.

- VA Form 21-526b for Veterans seeking increased benefits for conditions already determined by VA to be service-connected. This new form clearly describes the information needed to support claims for increased benefits.

To process claims faster, the VA has introduced two new forms for Veterans participating in the Department's new fully developed claim (FDC) program. These forms will ensure that the VA receives all of the available evidence when a claim is submitted, creating a system that will allow for the remaining steps in the claims-decision process to be efficient and expedited.

Earlier this year, Congressman Larson visited the Hartford Vet Center to speak with veterans about his efforts on their behalf and how his office can be of assistance to them. During the roundtable meeting, Congressman Larson spoke about how he assisted a Vietnam veteran from Rocky Hill receive his VA health benefits. The veteran's diagnosis of multiple myeloma was directly related to Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam. After receiving a notice that his claim would take six months to be processed, the veteran contacted Congressman Larson who intervened and was able to have the veteran's claim processed in less than a month. Since 2000, there has been a 75 percent increase in veterans' claims to the VA.

Congressman Larson's office can be reached at 860-278-8888 to answer questions about the VA claims and benefits process.

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